



# We can't rely on the government to solve our problems

Nonprofit and private-sector leaders need to come together to drive economic mobility.

By Ed Mitzen

Right now, tensions are playing out on a global stage, and in the U.S., our country finds itself in a pivotal moment. Just a few weeks ago, the government [deployed](#) 4,100 National Guard members and 700 Marines to respond to protests in Los Angeles. In parallel, the [One Big, Beautiful Bill Act](#) is making its way through the U.S. Congress. There are significant headlines everyday. But Americans are also grappling with other items on their mind. Can I afford rent this month? Can I put a down payment on a home? Do I have health insurance? Who's going to watch my kids this summer while I work?

Like the rest of the country, I've been watching the complete chaos that continues to unfold every day, and I've had to take a step back and ask—is the U.S. government really working to help Americans overcome their everyday worries and concerns?

If we wait for our elected officials on both sides of the aisle to get to the real work that needs to be done to help us, it may be too late.

The American Dream is out of reach for most Americans. Despite working full-time, many Americans can't build savings, afford higher education, or secure basic healthcare. Within [Q3 2024](#) alone, the top 10% of households by wealth had \$7.2 million on average, holding 67% of total household wealth. Meanwhile, the bottom 50% of households by wealth had \$52,000 on average, only holding 2.4% of total household wealth.

And it doesn't look good for the next generation. About 2 in 5 people under 30 say they're either "struggling to make ends meet" or "getting by with limited financial security," according to a survey of 2,096 adults ages 18 to 29, conducted by [Harvard's Institute of Politics](#)

between March 14 and 25, 2025. The survey also found that among this group, financial insecurity most affected women, Hispanics and those without college degrees. There's a pattern that needs to be addressed.

As leaders, we must accept that we've failed certain groups in getting them up the income curve, and we must work towards a period of rebuilding, where marginalized communities aren't forgotten, but instead they're offered a hand up to address the wealth gap head on and establish generational wealth for their families and communities. As an entrepreneur who has helped many small business owners with funding, connections, mentoring, and other support needed to achieve success and growth, I've seen the impacts this can have. But to create lasting change, it needs to be done on a national scale.

## THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN POLICY AND REALITY

While lawmakers push new bills or engage in partisan grandstanding, the structural issues affecting working families continue go unaddressed. This country has not been built for the middle and lower classes to succeed—and one of the most prominent ways that this shows is the rising cost of homes in the U.S. According to the [Case-Shiller National Home Price Index](#), home prices in the U.S. increased by 19% in 2020 alone—the largest yearly increase in the index's 30-year history. Since then, prices have continued to rise at [a record-breaking pace](#), increasing another 28% through May 2024.

Housing unaffordability impacts literally every community in this country. While the recently proposed [Higher Wages for American Workers Act](#) is a step forward in addressing some socioeconomic disparities, it's going to take more than increasing the minimum wage to help families buy a home. This is about action on a macro level. If we wait on government to "get it," we risk leaving an entire generation behind.

## THE SYSTEM NEEDS FIXING

On a local level, in New York's Capital Region where I am based, individuals making the median income in Albany and Saratoga Counties do not make enough to afford a house at the median sale price, and Albany has the second-largest gap between white and black homeowners nationwide; 68.9% homeownership among white households, compared to 20.1% home ownership among black households. Beyond the income gaps between the rich and the poor, the racial wealth gap

is also growing. But this isn't a local issue. This is a nationwide problem that is fostered by the people in charge.

If our state officials seem to be missing the point, it's time us in the nonprofit and private-sectors to roll up our sleeves and get to work. We can address bigger issues like income inequality and housing affordability, by focusing on the small, everyday solutions that add up to real meaningful change. At the Business for Good Foundation, we recently expanded our mission beyond supporting our local small businesses to include initiatives focused on economic mobility, community and workforce development, and housing accessibility and affordability. Each one of these areas is interconnected, and each represents an opportunity to lift people up, with access, equity, and investment in long-overlooked communities.

## REBUILDING FROM THE GROUND UP

This country has always promised a shot at something better. But if that promise doesn't include a safe place to live, a living wage, and a future your children can thrive in, then what are we promising?

You may have seen the cover of Fast Company's summer issue, "How '[Business for Good](#)' Went Bad." It made me think about why I built Business for Good Foundation, and why I continue to encourage fellow leaders to join this mission. I strongly believe there is still room in this country for more businesses doing good.

It's on us, as leaders, to come together and drive actionable change—and I encourage those who share this passion to address issues like economic disparities and the housing crisis in their own communities to join us.

We can do better. We must do better. And it starts now.



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